

New Brighton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104992
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	308729
Inspection dates	10–11 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Jane Jones HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	543
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr A Peckham
Headteacher	Mrs C Hibbard
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2004
School address	Vaughan Road Wallasey Wirral Merseyside CH45 1LH
Telephone number	0151 639 3869
Fax number	0151 638 9102

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

New Brighton Primary School is much larger than average. There are roughly equal numbers of boys and girls on roll. The pupils live in an area of some social and economic disadvantage: 28% receive free school meals, which is nearly double the national average. An increasing proportion of pupils, currently 6%, are of minority ethnic heritage or have home languages other than English. Around 25% have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is above average. Twenty-two pupils attend the school's two special units, almost all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. One unit admits Key Stage 2 pupils who have moderate learning difficulties and the other is for pupils in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 who have receptive and expressive language difficulties.

The school admits children of all abilities. Currently, most join with skills in line with those expected of their age. Around 50 enter the Nursery at age three with a further intake into the Reception class at age four. More pupils than average join or leave the school at times other than these two intakes.

The school holds a number of awards including the Healthy Schools and Activemark and has met the Financial Management Standards in Schools.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

New Brighton Primary School provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. Improvement since the last inspection four years ago has been too slow, with some issues identified then still requiring improvement. Better progress has been made in the last year, checked rigorously by the governing body. The school is now well placed to build on pupils' good behaviour and willingness to learn, strengthen provision, and raise standards and achievement across the school.

Achievement is satisfactory. Standards at the ends of Key Stages 1 and 2 are close to national averages. In 2007, the school did not meet most of its Key Stage 2 targets, particularly at Level 4, which is the standard expected by age 11. The shortfall stemmed primarily from a legacy of weak teaching in the past. There remains variability in the amount of progress pupils make in lessons because the teaching, although satisfactory overall, does not secure the rapid advances in learning that they need. There are positive signs that some progress is being made to tackle weaknesses in teaching.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Governance is good: governors ask challenging questions and are persistent in pursuing issues. The government's requirements for safeguarding are met. This year, senior leaders have sharpened the focus on raising standards and placed teaching and the engagement of all pupils in learning at the heart of its planning. Many appropriate management structures have been introduced; for example, the use of data to track pupils' progress is ensuring those identified at risk of significant underachievement receive targeted support. This work is having a positive impact on their progress and standards attained. Monitoring is enabling managers, including some subject leaders, to have a better grasp of the strengths and weaknesses in provision and to identify the professional development needs of staff. Although still in the early stages, all of this has contributed to the school's growing, and satisfactory capacity to improve. Nevertheless, there is an urgent need to increase the rate of improvement to ensure that all pupils are equipped for the next stage in their education.

Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Relationships between pupils and with adults are good. Overall pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Given the opportunity, pupils take responsibility and care for each other. They want to learn and would like lessons to be more exciting and active. They listen attentively but many have too few opportunities to contribute or show initiative. This means they are not developing as confident, independent learners. Attendance, an area for improvement from the previous inspection, improved considerably in 2006–07 to match the national average.

A thoughtful approach is taken to the curriculum, which is satisfactory. It is early for recent developments to be reflected in higher standards. The use of the outdoor environment for learning is weak, especially for the youngest children. Pastoral care is good but academic guidance is less well developed.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The overall provision, teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory. The school's data show that children joining the Nursery at age three and many others who enter Reception a year later typically have skills and understanding that are in line with those expected of children of their

age. They make satisfactory and sometimes good progress through Nursery and Reception and this ensures that the majority enter Year 1 already starting to read, write and use numbers.

The Foundation Stage environment is safe and secure; children settle into routines. Effective use is made of all adults to support small focus groups alongside continuous provision of a range of activities. The children obviously delight in exploring the many new and exciting opportunities to investigate their world. However, adults often over direct what and how the children should learn. Although children's progress is well promoted through all the different areas of learning, the outdoor curriculum is less well developed; children currently have limited opportunities to work together using larger scale resources. This is recognised by the Foundation Stage staff who have begun to plan ways to promote and extend creative and imaginative learning in the outdoor environment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement.
- Improve the quality of teaching.
- Increase pupils' confidence and independence as learners.
- Improve the outdoor curriculum, particularly in the Foundation Stage.
- In driving more rapid improvement, make better use of the outcomes of data analysis and monitoring activities in evaluating the impact of actions taken.

A small proportion of the schools where overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Most pupils are now making satisfactory progress although many have ground to make up due to weak provision during their earlier years in the school, particularly in Key Stage 2. Standards in national assessments and tests at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 in 2007 were broadly in line with national averages. Around four fifths of the pupils reached the level expected for their age and, at both key stages, the proportions doing even better were slightly above average.

The school did not meet its Key Stage 2 targets for Level 4 in English and mathematics. Analysis of the results shows boys generally did better than girls. However, pupils who have learning difficulties and those eligible for free school meals made less progress than their peers and attained lower standards by a bigger margin than is seen nationally. The school's data have not been interrogated sufficiently to explore this issue and consequently any underlying causes have not been identified.

Writing and science are currently areas of focus for the school, particularly in developing extended writing and scientific enquiry, where there are early signs of improvement. Standards in handwriting are low across the school, with many older pupils printing rather than writing in cursive script. While many classrooms have attractive displays, these do not consistently provide rich environments that support learning, celebrate pupils' work in writing for instance, or help pupils to recognise and aspire to higher standards in their work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils say that they mostly enjoy school. Because they 'like to get up and do things', they enjoy learning best when teachers use practical and investigative approaches that involve everyone. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is good, despite current restrictions on playground space due to building maintenance. They demonstrate respect for each other and for adults. They say they feel safe and know what to do and who to talk to if they felt unhappy or, uncommonly, were bullied.

Pupils understand how to live a healthy lifestyle, enjoying various after-school activities, physical education lessons, and games such as skipping and football at break and lunchtimes. Their social, moral, cultural and spiritual development is satisfactory overall, although their appreciation of life in a multicultural society is less well developed. Pupils enjoy holding responsibilities such as being a school councillor, a prefect or a playground buddy. School councillors actively contribute to improvements in the school.

Pupils' future economic well-being is promoted through the school bank and involvement in producing wares for school fetes. Pupils have opportunities to contribute to their local community through activities such as serving Christmas lunches to local pensioners. Attendance improved to 95% last year but has dipped this year due to a series of viral infections.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall but varies across the school. Inspection evidence confirms the school's view that there is a growing core of effective practice; around a third of the teaching is good. While nearly all the teaching is satisfactory or better, there is not enough that is good to ensure pupils' progress is similarly consistently good, and any legacy of underachievement eradicated.

Where teaching is good or better, there are high expectations of what pupils can achieve. The range of pupils' needs is well catered for and all pupils actively involved in their own learning. Time is used well. In a Year 1 literacy lesson, for example, the teacher provided stimulating activities and a raft of teacher-generated resources that encouraged all to give of their best. She used questioning skillfully and sensitively to draw out responses. However, the teaching does not always interest, encourage or engage all pupils, or challenge them to work to their full potential. In several lessons, activities were not well matched to pupils' needs and abilities. When teachers do most of the talking, pupils have limited opportunities to express their thinking. Pupils' misconceptions are therefore missed and their independent learning skills are not developed; too many pupils are insecure in their learning. Pupils' progress during the lesson is not always adequately checked or their reasoning probed; this can result in widespread errors and misunderstandings not emerging until after the lesson.

Teaching assistants support effectively pupils with specific needs. However, not all pupils have access to this valuable resource in mainstream lessons. There is scope to improve the monitoring of in-class provision for those pupils who have learning difficulties but who do not receive targeted support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory although pupils in Key Stage 2 receive less than the recommended weekly time. The curriculum emphasises the development of pupils' basic skills in English and mathematics while paying appropriate attention to other subjects. In practice, however, it is not fully successful in preparing all pupils well for the next stage in their education. Pupils' basic skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are promoted satisfactorily but are not used effectively as a tool to raise standards in all subjects.

The personal, social and health education programme is successful in raising pupils' self-esteem and helps them to understand healthy lifestyle choices and how to stay safe. Recent curriculum developments, whereby subjects such as history, geography and art are delivered in weekly 'blocks', have been designed to make learning more relevant and purposeful. The school has plans to evaluate how well this revised curriculum meets the learning needs of all pupils and bolsters their progress.

Work in classrooms is enhanced through extra-curricular activities and a good range of educational visits and visitors. The recent visit to Years 1 and 2 by two very real and stern Victorian characters was a good example of enriching activities that have a positive impact on pupils' enjoyment and contribute well to their health and personal development.

The two units for pupils who have learning difficulties provide them with a safe environment and specialised support. Some pupils join mainstream classes for subjects such as physical education, ICT and science, which promotes their inclusion into the wider school and the school is looking to extend this integration further. From time to time, pupils in need of individual support join the Key Stage 2 unit from the main school and from other local schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory overall. Staff care for pupils well; relationships are good. Vulnerable pupils and their families are provided with support through the school's extended provision and its work with outside agencies. Procedures to protect pupils and ensure their safety meet government requirements. Emerging issues are dealt with quickly so that pupils' emotional and support needs can be met.

Most parents are pleased with the school's work and many made positive comments, on the questionnaires. Several said how supportive they found staff to be, for instance, one parent wrote 'I'm totally impressed with their involvement and care.' Academic guidance is less well developed than pastoral care. The school uses data on pupils' progress to identify those who are at risk of falling behind and intervene with skilled targeted support. Pupils are generally aware of their curricular targets but teachers' planning does not consistently meet pupils' individual needs or abilities. Throughout the school, marking of pupils' work is often supportive but it does not always provide sufficiently clear and accurate guidance to help move pupils' learning forward.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Over the past four years, turbulence in staffing and the need to bring systems and structures up to date have meant that the school has not concentrated sufficiently on raising standards: progress on the areas for improvement has been slow. Over the last year, the pace has accelerated. The restructured leadership team has brought fresh impetus to the school's work and is now poised to drive improvement much more rapidly. Governance is good. Governors are committed to supporting the school; some are able to observe it at work. They ask challenging questions and pursue issues robustly, such as weaknesses in pupils' progress in Years 3 and 4. Overall, capacity to improve is satisfactory.

The school is broadly accurate in its self-evaluation and identifies appropriate areas for development. The headteacher has rightly placed teaching and learning and the successful engagement of all pupils in learning at the heart of the school's planning. Appropriate management structures have been introduced to positive effect. Underachieving pupils are identified and their progress monitored half termly by senior staff. However, the progress of other pupils, though tracked, is not analysed regularly to hold teachers to account. To date, too little attention has been given to pinpointing the weaknesses in teaching that have led to underachievement. As a result, the school does not set itself challenging enough targets to raise its performance. There is a need to be proactive in identifying underlying causes and tackling them robustly, as well as reacting to support individual pupils' needs when underachievement is found.

Middle managers are playing a more prominent role; for example, in monitoring provision through 'learning walks' and scrutiny of pupils' work. They provide feedback to staff but the long interval to the next phase of monitoring slows the potential for improvement. Overall, the school does not evaluate the effectiveness of its actions on a sufficiently regular basis. Subject action plans vary in quality and generally pay too little attention to classroom practice.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of New Brighton Primary School, Wirral, CH45 1LH

Thank you for being so polite and friendly when we visited your school to inspect how well it is doing. We enjoyed visiting your lessons and were interested to hear about the things you do in school and what you think about it.

Here are some of the good things we found about your school.

- You listen to your teachers and to each other very well in lessons. You like lessons best when there are lots of practical things for you to do and find out for yourselves.
- Your behaviour is good. You understand the school's systems of rules and rewards.
- You are willing helpers. The school councillors, prefects and playground buddies take their responsibilities seriously.
- You understand about eating healthy food and playing sports to keep fit.

We found that there were some important things that need to be better. These are the things we have asked your headteacher, the staff and governors to do.

- To make sure that all of you are fully involved in lessons, doing practical tasks and talking about what you are learning, so that you learn more in all your subjects. This should help you to do well in tests and prepare Year 6 pupils for secondary school.
- To plan work that interests you and challenges each of you - not too easy and not too difficult.
- To make sure that the youngest pupils learn and play outdoors as well as indoors, especially once the new playground equipment arrives.
- To check regularly that changes and new ideas are working well and are improving the school.

I am sure you will want to help. Why don't you tell the school councillors your ideas?

Good luck in the future.